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**Subject: Nutrition Education – Individual Counseling**

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Effective Date: October 1, 2005

Revised from:

**Policy:** Individual counseling is an approved nutrition education method for the certification and succeeding low and high-risk contacts. Individual counseling shall follow the basic principles in **NED: 01.00.00–Nutrition Education Overview** and be based on the participant's nutritional needs and interests, cultural and language preferences and literacy level.

Individual counseling should appeal to the client, and be interactive and actively engage the client and other family members. Individual counseling should incorporate community and national nutrition messages (e.g., folic acid, 5-A-Day etc.) and focus on lifelong positive dietary, physical activity, and health habits to prevent disease. Individual counseling should be responsive to the client's needs, be family centered, and encourage behavior change.

**Reference: § 246.11, WIC Nutrition Services Standards, Standard 8**

**Procedure:**

Follow the steps below to provide individual counseling to clients:

1. Gather information.

Ask open-ended, guiding questions to identify the client's knowledge and interests. For example:

- "What have you heard about breastfeeding?"
- "What do you know about folic acid?"
- "Tell me about how you/your child are eating?"

2. Affirm the client's feelings.

Affirm the client's feelings and acknowledge that the client's concerns are normal. For example:

- "I have heard many women say that"
- "This is a common concern with children of this age"

3. Educate the client.

Give only specific information in which the client is interested. For example:

- If the client is concerned about her child's weight, discuss ways to lower the fat and/or sugar in the child's diet and/or increase activity
- If the client is constipated, discuss how to increase liquid and fiber intake

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- If the client is concerned that she will not make enough breast milk, discuss signs of adequate intake by her infant
4. Engage the client in goal setting.  
Actively involve the client/caregiver in setting realistic, achievable goals. For example:
- "I plan to exclusively breastfeed my infant for at least 3 months"
  - "I plan to call for a breast pump two weeks before I return to work/school"
  - "I will drink two cups of milk each day while I'm pregnant"
  - "I will give my child water at meals"
5. Make appropriate referrals.  
Direct the client to appropriate services to help achieve goal(s). For example:
- Refer clients to community cooking class to learn how to better feed their family on a budget.
  - Refer to a breastfeeding peer counselor for follow-up breastfeeding support
6. Document nutrition education on the Topics, Plan tab and Notes section in KWIC as appropriate.